



NORTH DAKOTA
DEPARTMENT *of* HEALTH

NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release:

Sept. 22, 2014

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North Dakota Department of Health Urges Everyone to Get Vaccinated This Flu Season

BISMARCK, N.D. – The North Dakota Department of Health is reminding all North Dakotans of the importance of getting vaccinated against the flu, according to Amy Schwartz, immunization surveillance coordinator for the Department of Health.

“A couple of vaccine manufacturers are reporting delays in shipments of flu vaccine this year, but it is anticipated that there will be an adequate supply of flu vaccine starting in October. We are urging everyone to get vaccinated to avoid influenza, regardless of age or health status,” Schwartz said. “Getting vaccinated is the easiest and most effective way to protect yourself and your loved ones from the flu. Even if you don’t feel the need to be vaccinated to protect yourself, everyone is close to someone who is at high risk for complications due to influenza, so you still should be vaccinated to protect those people.”

In North Dakota, influenza activity begins in the fall and typically peaks in March or April. Health officials say that people can get vaccinated any time during the influenza season, but the best time to get vaccinated is now, when flu activity is low.

During a news conference held today at Custer Health in Mandan three generations of family members, Jenn Pelster, 31, a Registered Nurse with Custer Health, along with her mother, Sharon Renschler, 63, and her daughter Mikah Anderson, 12, were all vaccinated. Pelster knows that protecting her family from getting sick is important, and urged others to follow their example.

“I have had the flu in the past and it is completely miserable,” she said. “If there is something that can prevent a life threatening illness, why would you not take part? I get my daughter Mikah the flu shot because she has asthma and is more prone to respiratory illnesses, so the vaccine helps avoid unnecessary complications and improves the quality of her life.”

During the 2013-14 seasons there were 2,922 cases of flu, including 149 hospitalizations and eight confirmed deaths (three in adults under the age of 60).

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The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends that everyone age 6 months and older be vaccinated against the flu, especially the following people at high risk for complications:

- All children ages 6 months through 4 years
- All adults 50 and older
- Residents of long-term care facilities
- People of any age who have long-term health problems, such as:
 - Heart disease
 - Lung disease
 - Kidney disease
 - Diabetes
 - Asthma
 - Anemia
 - Weakened immune systems due to HIV/AIDS and cancer treatments
 - Breathing problems due to neuromuscular disorders
- Pregnant women
- American Indians/Alaska Natives
- People who are morbidly obese

People who could spread the disease to those at high risk – such as health-care workers, out-of-home caregivers, parents and caregivers of infants younger than 6 months, and household contacts –should also be vaccinated. Additionally, there is a new recommendation this year for children between the ages of two and eight to receive the nasal spray vaccine over the injectable vaccine if it is available. The nasal spray vaccine has been shown to be more effective in this age group.

“This past season we saw fewer cases than the previous season, but we saw a larger proportion of cases in working-age adults (19-59),” said Jill Baber, influenza surveillance coordinator. “This highlights the importance of everyone being vaccinated, not just young children, people older than 50 and those with high risk conditions. It is better to have a sore arm for one day after getting vaccinated than to be out of work sick for a week.”

Custer Health has scheduled their community wide clinic for Thursday, Oct. 2 from 11 a.m. to 7 p.m. at the Mandan Brave Center. Refer to their website, www.custerhealth.com, for more information on dates and times that flu vaccine will be available. “Custer Health has designated October as our flu immunization month. We schedule almost all of our flu clinics during October so we can get as many people vaccinated as soon as possible,” said Jessica Barker with Custer Health.

Clinics are being planned by local public health units across the state and vaccine is available from many doctors and pharmacists. Residents are encouraged to contact their local public health unit, doctor or pharmacist for information about vaccine availability in their area.

For more information, contact Amy Schwartz or Jill Baber, North Dakota Department of Health, at 701.328.2378. Information about influenza can be found at www.ndflu.com.

REMEMBER: A flu vaccine can protect not only you, but everyone around you.

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